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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

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Intelligence Memorandum

*Communist Logistic Developments in Laos and Cambodia
Midway Through the 1971/72 Dry Season*

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
March 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

COMMUNIST LOGISTIC DEVELOPMENTS
IN LAOS AND CAMBODIA
MIDWAY THROUGH THE 1971/72 DRY SEASON

Introduction

1. This memorandum discusses enemy logistic activity thus far in the 1971/72 dry season, focusing especially on the period since early January when the Communists launched their annual logistic "General Transportation Offensive" aimed at moving large quantities of supplies into and through south Laos. An overview of Communist logistic developments in north Laos also is included.

Summary

2. The Communists continue to improve their logistical capabilities in Laos and Cambodia during the current dry season. A new road corridor has been built through the central Laotian Panhandle. In Cambodia, over 100 miles of new road are being constructed to augment the north-south system already in existence. Three new roads are under construction into South Vietnam through the DMZ, and a series of new roads is being constructed south of the tri-border area, presumably to support troop deployments in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam. In addition to these physical refinements, the Communists have made substantial changes in their logistical apparatus to improve command and control in south Laos and Cambodia and have augmented logistical personnel in these areas.

3. The pattern of supply flows in south Laos this dry season has roughly paralleled that of the 1970/71 season, though total supply movements [redacted] at the Laos Panhandle entry corridors have lagged behind last year. "Priming" of the system - resupply to meet

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internal requirements in the Panhandle -- began in November and continued through December. On 10 January the Communists kicked off their annual logistic General Offensive. All sources reflected an immediate spurt in logistic activity

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By the end of January,

indicated considerable activity on the cross-border roads into South Vietnam and Cambodia. Resupply activity in northeast Cambodia this dry season has tracked closely with that in south Laos. Volumes shipped on roads and rivers increased noticeably in January, and daylight movement has been observed. By early February, southward supply movement toward the COSVN area of Cambodia was accelerating.

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4. Significant amounts of arms and ammunition have now,

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been moved into stockpiles in forward positions in Laos and Cambodia. While it is not possible to quantify precisely the enemy's current capability to support offensives in the Central Highlands and GVN MR 1, all signs suggest that it is substantial. Furthermore, the tempo of resupply activity in the COSVN area of Cambodia indicated a growing potential for supporting major action in that region (and adjacent GVN MR 3) as well.

5. In north Laos the Communists launched their resupply campaign in September, and by late October the major roads to and within the Plaine des Jarres (PDJ) were open and sustaining moderate to heavy traffic. Resupply -- including, for the first time, the movement of 130-mm field guns -- was at a high pitch in November, reflecting considerable stockpiling. With these logistic preparations made, the Communists in mid-December swept across the PDJ in a few days. Quickly outrunning logistic resupply lines, the enemy offensive west of the PDJ slowed. However, the recent construction of a new road west of the PDJ, as well as a continued high level of logistical preparations, indicates that the enemy intends still further offensive moves in coming weeks.

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Discussion

Organizational Developments

6. The 1971/72 dry season supply campaign in south Laos has brought significant changes in the Communist logistic command and control apparatus there.

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Status of LOCs

South Laos

13. Major new road and pipeline construction has been a key feature of enemy logistic activity thus far this dry season in south Laos. ☐

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☐ the Communists have:

- . constructed a new central north-south corridor deep into the southern Panhandle;
- . started construction of a parallel road to western Route 110 into Cambodia;
- . built a new road through the central DMZ into South Vietnam and continued work on two roads started earlier through the DMZ; and
- . extended the petroleum pipeline to a point six miles south of Muong Nong.

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[redacted]

14. First indications of the new north-south corridor came in late October 1971 [redacted]

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indicated that Route 958 east of Attapeu was being extended northwest along the Se Kong River to the vicinity of Route 9211 north of Ban Phone. Subsequent reporting revealed that the enemy had upgraded sections of existing Route 165/164 to facilitate reaching the crossing point on the river where a ford was being prepared. [redacted]

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construction on this new corridor was not restricted to the southern part of the Panhandle and that a new north-south road also was being constructed north of Saravane between and parallel to Routes 99 and 23. By late January the road extended from Route 9147, east of Muong Phine, to Routes 162/9211 east of Saravane, thus effectively completing the new north-south corridor.

15. This new central corridor enables the Communists to bypass their traditional base areas around Tchepone, Muong Nong, Ban Bac, and Chavane and provides direct access deep into the Panhandle, the tri-border area, and northeast Cambodia. The Communists have used this new corridor as quickly as construction has permitted. Pilot sightings of convoys of heavily laden trucks on the section north of Saravane were becoming almost commonplace by late January.

16. Late last fall, enemy engineers began building a new road parallel to and south of Route 110/97 near the Laos-Cambodia border. First observed in December 1971 [redacted]

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still in an early construction phase. Work is proceeding rapidly, however, and when completed, the road probably will join another new road paralleling Route 97 farther south in Cambodia. Historically, the enemy has double-tracked vital roads to give his logistic system flexibility and redundancy -- the new road underscores the importance of this cross-border route.

17. In the DMZ area, important new Communist road construction projects have been under way throughout the dry season. Clearing and excavation of a new road through the central DMZ was first detected in December 1971. It begins at Route 102 in North Vietnam and extends through the DMZ 7 miles to a point about 4 miles northwest of Fire Support Base Fuller in South Vietnam. The road is being pushed down a stream valley toward Route 9. A few miles to the west of this road, construction (which started in June 1971) also continues on the road that extends from the junction of Routes 103/120 to a point just north of Route 608. Route 608 is motorable to Khe Sanh. Farther south, the segment of the road between Routes 9 and 616 south of Khe Sanh is still under construction, but the entire road from the DMZ to Khe Sanh could be completed in a few weeks if the Communists choose to do so. The petroleum

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pipeline, which enters south Laos through the western DMZ area in the Panhandle of Laos, had, by January, been extended 15 miles south from its previous terminus north of Muong Nong. From this point the pipeline probably will be extended to Ban Bac or even farther south.

Northeast Cambodia

18. North Vietnamese engineers reopened the overland cross-border route - Route 110/97 - between Laos and northeast Cambodia in early December, about three weeks ahead of last season's schedule. Restoration and upgrading of the Route 110/97 system has included the construction of permanent bridge crossings, new roadside bunkered storage facilities, and increased anti-aircraft protection.

19. The Communists also have focused on expanding the overland supply corridor between south Laos and Stung Treng and improving their access into the B-3 Front area south of the tri-border. Construction crews so far have cleared nearly 100 miles of new road segments generally paralleling the existing roadnet from the Laos border to Stung Treng. (During the 1970/71 dry season, the Communists had built or restored about 200 miles of roadway linking Laos with Stung Treng.) Although the new parallel route had not been put into service by the end of January, the northern segment between the border and Siem Pang appeared completed. The southern half of the new road should become usable within several weeks at the rate of construction noted in January. Until then, enemy trucks will continue using the more circuitous Route 113/13 to move supplies south of Siem Pang toward Stung Treng. Existing roads radiating from Stung Treng remain in good to excellent motorable condition and continue to provide the Communists with ready access to their enclaves on either side of the Mekong.

20. The North Vietnamese have constructed a series of new roads and associated facilities south of the tri-border, presumably in support of increased enemy deployments to the B-3 Front. New road clearing activity has been observed in the tri-border area since February 1971, but since December the tempo of construction has increased markedly. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the excavation of at least 30 miles of new spur road segments leading generally east of the existing north-south Route 613. One of the new spurs appears headed for two ARVN fire support bases located near Ben Het, South Vietnam, and may be intended for moving tanks and heavy weapons near these outposts (several sightings of camouflaged tanks were reported in the vicinity of this new road during January).

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Supply MovementsSouth Laos

21. The sum of our sources on supply movements into and through south Laos this dry season clearly indicates that the Communists have made impressive preparations for offensive activity; however, there are anomalies in the pattern of supply flows

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- . The extensive expansion of the south Laos-Cambodian logistic system last dry season may have required levels of supply input that, under present circumstances, are unnecessary.
- . Inputs from North Vietnam may be lower this year as a result of concerted efforts by the Communists to achieve greater self-sufficiency in rice in south Laos and northern South Vietnam.
- . The improved enemy logistic system in Cambodia may be operating more effectively this year, particularly in terms of meeting a greater share of the logistic requirements of the Communist forces in south Laos.

22. Following an unprecedented road maintenance effort last summer, the North Vietnamese began preparing for their dry season supply campaign in October. Heavy rains during the month, however, interrupted these preparations and delayed the campaign. Nevertheless, by early November the Communists had recovered from the impact of the storms and had begun moving supplies at significant levels into the Laotian Panhandle from North Vietnam, though the pace appeared measured, unhurried, and at a rate much below the system's capability.

23. As November progressed the impact of the increased supply flow began to be noted farther south.

area tripled. A similar increase was detected in the (Ban Bac) area deep in the Panhandle during the week beginning 1 December. By mid-December, FACs reported moderate to heavy traffic, not only in

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the entry corridors but also on the major north-south access roads.

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24. The Communists organize the movement of supplies through the Panhandle into South Vietnam and Cambodia by means of annual "General Transportation Offensives," coordinated Panhandle-wide efforts that follow "crash" campaigns which ensure that all roads and bridges are open, gasoline distributed, and stockpiles prepositioned. After three months of preparation, the North Vietnamese launched this year's "General Transportation Offensive" on 10 January. All intelligence indicators immediately reflected a sharp acceleration in the pace of logistic activity at levels significantly higher than in December.

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detected 760 trucks moving from North Vietnam into the Laotian Panhandle - an increase of 27% over the level of the previous week.

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indicated heavy transport activity on major roads throughout the Panhandle, including the new central corridor.

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26. This accelerated logistic pace resulted in a significant increase in detected supply throughput to South Vietnam and Cambodia.

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vehicles exiting the Panhandle, particularly along Route 9 into northern MR 1, increased markedly by mid-January; and, by the end of the month, moderate to heavy traffic on all exit routes except Route 926.

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Northeast Cambodia

29. Logistic activity in northeast Cambodia this dry season has followed the same pattern as in the Laotian Panhandle. During the last quarter of 1971, supply activity was largely in support of the restoration of the roadnet. Supply flows were predominantly northbound and comprised mainly rice and petroleum.

30. Once the General Offensive began in January, however, supply shipments -- moving both north and south -- picked up markedly. During the second week in January, [] signs of a surge in use of the Route 97 system between the Laos-Cambodia border and Siem Pang in Cambodia. Trucks were sighted carrying supplies during daylight hours, indicating a sense of urgency on the part of the enemy. Furthermore, the enemy has continued to use -- though to a limited extent -- the Tonle Kong and the Tonle San Rivers despite navigation hazards and shallow depths. []

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Sea Infiltration of Supplies

31. The latest Communist sea infiltration attempt from North Vietnam, detected on 16 February 1972, was unsuccessful -- making it the ninth observed failure since the start of the 1971/72 dry season. All of these attempts have involved relatively large steel-hulled ships of the SL class with capacities of 100 tons or more. All but one of the attempts

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[redacted]

appeared destined for GVN MR 4, suggesting that the Communists continue to have supply difficulties in the Delta region of South Vietnam.

32. Although each of the detected sea infiltration attempts from North Vietnam this dry season has failed, recent reporting from several sources, [redacted]

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[redacted] indicates that the Communists may have used smaller boats to infiltrate supplies by sea from Cambodia to the southern coastal region of South Vietnam during 1971. For several years, [redacted]

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[redacted] arms shipments originating from the Cambodian coast of Kampot Province on sampans and other craft with relatively small capacities. On several occasions in 1971, US Navy planes attacked such boats off the west coast of South Vietnam, destroying many.

33. Communist resupply requirements in southern MR 4 are small, and any successful infiltration, even with sampans, would help meet essential needs. [redacted]

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[redacted] suggesting that the Communists' supply situation may now have improved.

Enemy Logistics in North Laos

34. The Communists' dry-season effort in north Laos was well under way by mid-September. Roads had been improved and repaired, [redacted]

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35. By late October, [redacted] Route 7 system from North Vietnam to the Plaine des Jarres (PDJ) was open and sustaining moderate traffic into the northeastern PDJ. Similarly, the principal routes in the northeastern PDJ - Routes 7, 71, and 74 - reportedly were in good condition and sustaining moderate to heavy levels of vehicle activity.

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37. Supply activity [redacted] continued at a fast pace in early December as the Communists made final preparations to launch their offensive. The alternate route toward the PDJ - Routes 72 and 4 - began to be used heavily, allowing supplies to be moved from North Vietnam directly to the east-central PDJ. These preparations completed, the Communists began their offensive on 18 December, and in a few days the Communists had overrun nearly all of the pro-government positions on the PDJ. After regrouping briefly on the western PDJ and extending his supply lines, the enemy again took the offensive and, by mid-January, had gained control over nearly all important targets between the PDJ and the pro-government base at Long Tieng. Supply deliveries kept pace with the level of tactical activity through mid-January [redacted]

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39. West of the PDJ, the Communists were having more vexing supply problems. [redacted] by mid-January the Communists had overextended their supply lines, resulting in food and ammunition shortages. [redacted]

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[redacted] and all sources indicated a high level of activity west of the PDJ aimed at alleviating the difficulties. The pace of supply activity on the southern and western edges of the PDJ remained at a very high level as supplies were moved there for further delivery westward.

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[redacted]

40. As the focus of NVA tactical activity in north Laos has moved west, so has logistic activity. The most important logistic development west of the PDJ has been the recent construction of a new road from Route 5 on the southern tip of the PDJ toward Ban Hintang. Evidence of the new construction along an existing trail network began to appear in mid-January,

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[redacted] Construction on this high-priority project progressed rapidly. By the end of February, [redacted] the new route was motorable for light vehicular traffic to Ban Hintang. An extension of the route to the west of Ban Hintang and clearing beyond The Tam Bleung and toward Long Tieng has also been noted. The completion of this new construction will significantly strengthen the Communists' logistic posture for renewed assault on the Long Tieng complex.

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41. [redacted]

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[redacted] Although there is no way to determine the scope of the activity planned by the Communists, their logistic apparatus continues to function in high gear - more supplies have been detected moving into north Laos this dry season than ever before.

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